

Senate should create confirmation criteria

Following a suggestion from Student Senate Chairman Randy MacDonald, the senate is investigating an addition to its bylaws defining the process and guidelines for the confirmation of ASUO appointments.

The senate should develop such guidelines to ensure that its confirmations are responsible and consistent, and therefore fulfill the critical role it plays in the ASUO's governmental system.

The question arises after the controversial confirmation of James Randall to the Incidental Fee Committee last spring.

The senate initially voted not to confirm Randall. Questioning the senate's procedure, the executive again submitted Randall, along with six other appointees, to the senate Tuesday night of finals week in an effort to make the appointments before the senate adjourned for the summer.

At this meeting, responding to the procedural questions and strong support of the executive, the senate overturned its previous decision and confirmed Randall.

The primary confusion facing the new senate, most of whose members were newly elected, was what criteria to use for confirmations.

MacDonald defined confirmation criteria for the senate at the time, but it is unclear if the senate knew such criteria had not been accepted formally by the senate and could be challenged.

MacDonald has started the process to formalize such criteria. Some of his proposals are good, particularly about the conduct of senate confirmation hearings; the hearings should be open, with the potential appointee and a representative of the president present to respond to both the senate and any public testimony.

On the other hand, the senate should be careful about restricting itself in what criteria are appropriate for confirmation deliberations.

The emphasis of any confirmation hearing should be on the performance of the potential appointee; if students have complaints about the appointee's previous conduct as an ASUO official, such complaints must be considered by their representatives on the senate.

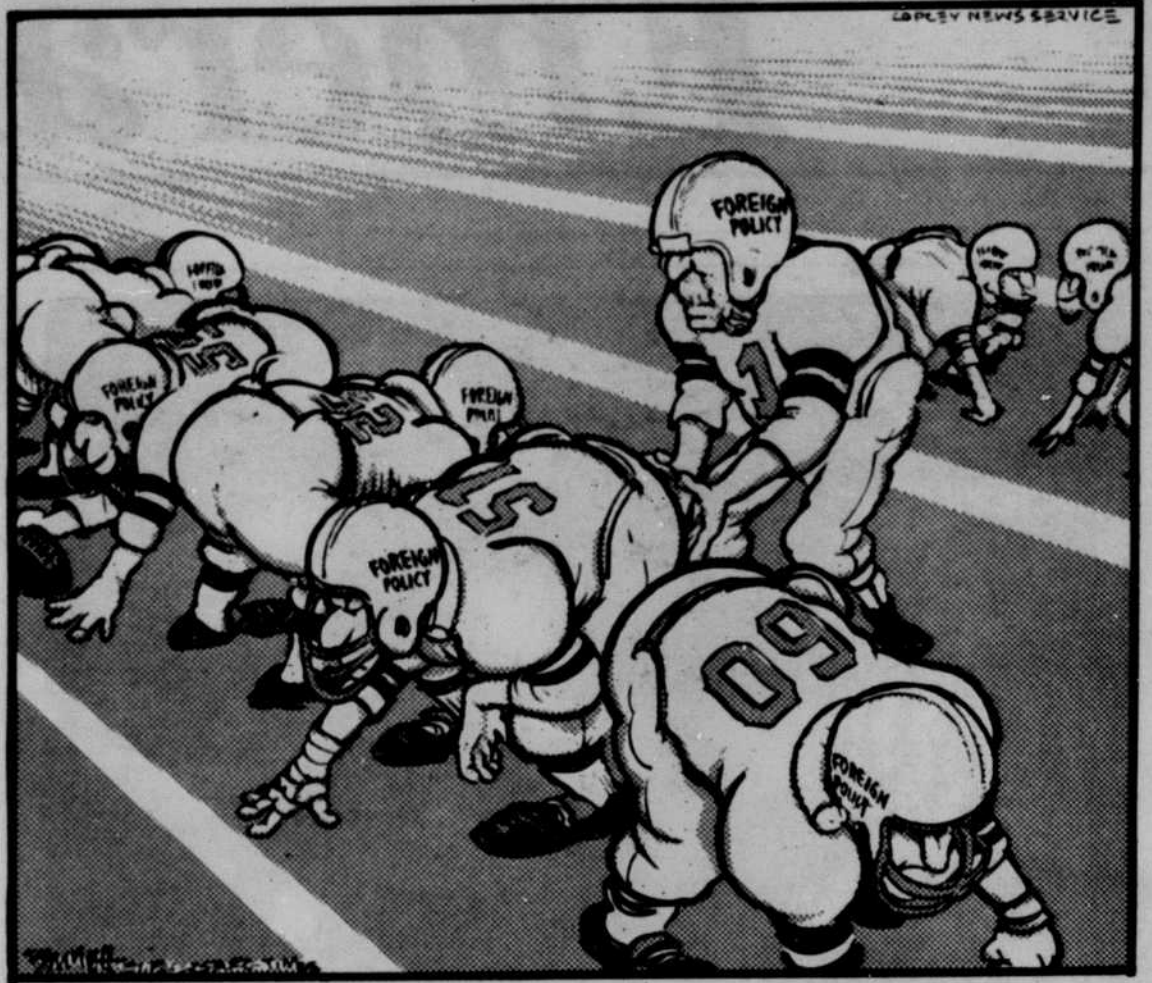
In an oft-forgotten clause, the ASUO Constitution forbids political discrimination, so the political beliefs or affiliations of appointees are not appropriate considerations. However, it is a valid concern if the senate feels an appointee has shown an insensitivity to the non-discrimination doctrine or any other constitutional doctrine.

While it would be easier if the senate played a minimal role in the confirmation process, students must have this representative input into officials who are appointed rather than elected — especially since one appointment to either the five-member Constitution Court or the seven-member IFC represents a substantial portion of the body's vote.

The ASUO must wean itself from the notion that it is a student advocacy agency, and that the confirmation process is part of a glorified hiring process. Ultimately, these questions must be dealt with as governance questions rather than as administrative questions.

With no clear hierarchical structure, the ASUO relies on devices such as senate confirmations to provide the few important checks within student government.

In practice, the senate will continue to support the vast majority of presidential appointments. If, however, a president makes a series of controversial appointments, the senate must have meaningful oversight to protect student interests as the appointments are made.



Letters

Humanism

In a previous letter I said that Christians had no grounds for opposing abortion (ODE, Dec. 2). Humanists, on the other hand (and I regard myself as one of them) believe that man is the measure of all things.

If there is any principle that a Humanist should hold above all others, it is a reverence for life. However, many who call themselves Humanists apparently regard abortion as the moral equivalent of clipping a fingernail.

The convenience of the powerful supercedes the survival of the helpless. As predicted by many abortion opponents, the thoughtless acceptance of abortion has led to the termination of other "inconvenient" lives, even after their birth. The infamous Indiana case a few years ago in which a newborn infant was starved to death with the permission of a judge is an example.

It is hard to understand how anyone who considers human life the pinnacle of creation can support abortion. Such people hide their heads from the cer-

tainty that abortion — like hunting, boxing and capital punishment — damages the value system that places life in a special category above material objects.

This argument, however, makes sense only to those who love and respect the human race — not to a Christian who believes man to be worthy of eternal torture.

Of course, I am speaking to a tiny audience here. Most students have little regard for God or man. They revere only their future paychecks and stock options. They will find their lives woefully empty.

Stan VerNooy
GTF, math

Research

Should our Riverfront Research Park be a backroom for faculty participation in classified Star Wars research?

The announced policies of the University administration make it all too easy for that to occur, in violation of the spirit of faculty legislation banning classified research on campus.

Vice President John Moseley will explain the administration position at the Faculty Senate meeting this week, Wednesday, Dec. 10, at 3:30 p.m. in Room 338 Gilbert Hall.

This is a rare opportunity for Assembly members to hear and appraise administration reasoning that threatens the quality of

education and the principle of faculty governance at the University.

Franklin W. Stahl
Biology professor

Think again

This letter is addressed to Clint Kaster, who wrote to defend Ronald Reagan and to assert that Nixon was a far worse criminal (ODE, Dec. 8).

Mr. Kaster is very loyal and patriotic. He is also the kind of blind dupe who would have worked for Nixon.

Mr. Kaster claims that when Nixon violated the trust of the American voters, he did something far worse than Reagan's arms deals (with Iran) to fund the Contras.

This kind of chauvinism makes me sick. Richard Nixon got into dirty politics, Clint. Ronald Reagan either knew or should have known that arms were sold to fund the rape of women, the murder of children and the burning of crops and schools in memory of Anastasio Somoza and William Walker.

To the best of my knowledge, Watergate led to no rapes, murders or school-burnings. Think again Clint!

Michael Dawson
Senior, sociology

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Letters to the editor must be limited to 250 words, typed, signed and the identification of the writer must be verified when the letter is turned in. The Emerald reserves the right to edit any letter for length or style. Letters to the editor should be turned into the Emerald office, Suite 300, EMU.

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